WE CLAIM:

1. A method of updating inventory markings, comprising the steps of:

(a) storing information relating to inventory products in a data base of a host computer;

(b) periodically updating the information relating to the products;

(c) identifying at least one of the products by electro-optically reading indicia thereon having parts of different light reflectivity;

(d) interrogating the host computer on a real-time basis for the updated information on the indentified product;

(e) printing an updated label containing the updated information obtained from the host computer in the event that the stored information has been updated; and

(f) applying the updated label to the identified product.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the identifying step is performed by directing a light beam to the indicia, detecting at least a portion of light of variable intensity reflected off the indicia over a field of view, scanning at least one of said light beam and said field of view, and processing electrical signals indicative of the detected light intensity into data descriptive of the indicia.

3. The method according to claim 2, wherein the identifying step is performed in a hand-held head aimable at the indicia during reading.

4. The method according to claim 2, wherein the identifying step is performed in a head of a desktop, stand-alone workstation.

5. The method according to claim 2, wherein the identifying step is performed in a movable head positionable relative to a work surface.

6. The method according to claim 5, wherein the head is connected to one end of a bendable arm; and further comprising the step of bending the arm to position the head in a desired orientation.

7. The method according to claim 1, wherein the identifying step is performed in a head, and wherein the interrogating step is performed by interconnecting the head and the host computer.

8. The method according to claim 1, wherein the identifying step is performed in a head, and wherein the printing step is performed by mounting a printer on-board the head.

9. The method according to claim 1, wherein the printing step is performed by a portable printer.

10. The method according to claim 1, wherein the printing step is performed by printing sequential coded data indicative of the total number of updated printed labels.

11. The method according to claim 1, wherein the printing step is performed by printing machine-readable characters on the updated label.

12. The method according to claim 1, wherein the storing and updating steps are performed by storing and updating price information relating to the products.

13. The method according to claim 12, wherein the price information includes price per unit weight information; and further comprising the step of weighing the identified product prior to the interrogating step.

14. An arrangement for updating inventory markings, comprising:

(a) a host computer having a data base in which information relating to inventory products is stored and periodically updated;

(b) identifying means for electro-optically reading indicia having parts of different light reflectivity applied on the products;

(c) means for interrogating the host computer on a real-time basis for the updated information on the respective identified products;

(d) means for printing an updated label containing the updated information obtained from the host computer for each identified product in the event that the stored information has been updated; and

(e) means for applying the updated label to the identified product.

15. The arrangement according to claim 14, wherein the identifying means includes means for directing a light beam to the indicia, means for detecting at least a portion of light of variable intensity reflected off the indicia over a field of view, means for scanning at least one of said light beam and said field of view, and means for processing electrical signals indicative of the detected light intensity into data descriptive of the indicia.

16. The arrangement according to claim 15, wherein the identifying means are mounted in a hand-held head aimable at the indicia during reading.

17. The arrangement according to claim 15, wherein the identifying means are mounted in a head of a desk-top, stand-alone workstation.

18. The arrangement according to claim 15, wherein the identifying means are mounted in a movable head positionable relative to a work surface.

19. The arrangement according to claim 18, wherein the head is connected to one end of an arm that is bendable to position the head in a desired orientation.

20. The arrangement according to claim 14, wherein the identifying means are mounted in a head, and wherein the interrogating means includes an interconnecting cable between the head and the host computer.

21. The arrangement according to claim 14, wherein the identifying means are mounted in a head, and wherein the printing means is mounted on-board the head.

22. The arrangement according to claim 14, wherein the printing means is a portable printer.

23. The arrangement according to claim 14, wherein the printing means is operative for printing sequential coded data indicative of the total number of updated printed labels.

24. The arrangement according to claim 14, wherein the printing means is operative for printing machine-readable characters on the updated label.

25. The arrangement according to claim 14, wherein the data base stores price information relating to the products.

26. The arrangement according to claim 25, wherein the price information includes price per unit weight information; and further comprising scale means for weighing the identified product.

27. The arrangement according to claim 14, wherein the identifying means includes multiple satellite stations interacting with the host computer.

28. The arrangement according to claim 14, wherein the identifying means has an inactive state in which the indicia are not read, a standby state in which the indicia are oriented in a desired orientation, and a reading state in which the indicia are read.

29. In a system for reading indicia having parts of different light reflectivity, an arrangement comprising:

(a) a housing having a printed circuit board mounted therein;

(b) means on the board for electro-optically reading indicia, said scanning means including decode circuitry having settable electrical components whose settings are adjustable; and

(c) control means on the board for controlling the reading of the indicia, said control means including a pre-programmed microprocessor operative for dynamically adjusting the settings of the electrical components to optimize reading performance during reading of the indicia.